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Make use of the UN

As expected, former Gen. Vernon Walters has been confirmed and sworn in as United States ambassador to the United Nations with considerably more ease than most Reagan administration appointments. Mr. Walters previously served as deputy CIA director and global trouble-shooter with distinction, and brings to the UN job more expertise and hard experience than has been seen there in years.

He may even be able to bring about a change in the administration attitude toward the UN, one that will view the world body less as an ideological battleground and more as a far-reaching organization that can serve many American interests.

Mr. Walters' controversial predecessor, the iconoclastic Dr. Jeane Kirkpatrick, made one valuable contribution in her four years in office: She convinced the UN's 150-odd members that, since the U.S. picks up 25 percent of the UN's \$1.5 billion annual budget, it was starting to take General Assembly and Security Council votes very seriously.

Beyond that, the organization's workings seemed outside her ken. She took an "us vs. them" attitude toward the body, overlooking the fact that for all its flaws and folly, it represents a real world the U.S. must deal with every day. Its wide and varied membership is no monolith, but mirrors all manner of competing interests. If the Latin American bloc was not enthusiastic about U.S. Central American policy, neither was it much supportive of Nicaragua's. The Soviet Union has lately come in for as much flak from the

Second and Third Worlds as has the West.

Part of the problem is that so much of the American UN mission's staff comes and goes with each ambassador. While this should be true at the top policy levels, there should be more sophistication, experience and permanency at the lower levels. As a longtime veteran of the CIA, State Department and White House, Mr. Walters should know the value of a highly professional staff. There's more to be gained from diplomacy than rhetorical flourishes, and it's time the U.S. started getting it's UN money's worth.